

1-1-2010

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Recommended Citation

McFarlane, Donovan (2010) "Accreditation Discrimination: Impact on School Choice, Costs, and Professional Prospects in Academia," *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal*: Vol. 8 : Iss. 4 , Article 7.
Available at: <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj/vol8/iss4/7>

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Academic Leadership Journal

Accreditation Discrimination: Impact on School Choice, Costs, and Professional Prospects in Academia

Issues: [Fall 2010 - Volume 8 Issue 4](#)

Posted On 2010-10-28 08:24:00

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Introduction

Universities and colleges in the 21st century have taken on extreme forms of business orientation and corporate success models, taking their strategies and cues from successful business corporations and business leaders. This stems from several factors including competition in the overall economy, increased demand for training and qualifications; hence an increased demand for degrees and certifications (not necessarily an increased demand for “education” in the strict classical sense of the word, since many individuals are graduating from colleges and universities nowadays with degrees and low levels of literacy or marginally educated), contraction of economies and industries, economic saturation and increased resource constraints and limitations by increased urbanization and a global village complex, the decline of land ownership and cottage industry opportunities, lack of growth, innovation, and dynamism in survival and sustainability practices, and increased assumption and misperception concerning the economic versus the social value of education. In addition, competition as the overarching factor complicating education’s major purpose and role as a socialization agent has propelled universities and colleges to the top of the economic-capitalist earning machine which drives a rugged modernity with increasingly fewer concerns for posterity.

Universities and colleges are now functioning as degree-producing, career-training, certification-based wholesale and retail centers to supply a rapidly changing society and global corporate world with candidates at an extremely high rate of turnover than ever before, rather than as noble institutions of education which once produced beings more social, caring, passionate, generous and loyal than the hoards of financial “Ferengis” we see daily on Wall Street or around us and in our immediate organizational environments. Like the Ferengis from the *Star Trek* series, we see a society built around profit and monetary gains where the major force driving educational institutions and their enrollees is money; pure profit and economic factors for the majority. The Ferengis were a space-faring humanoid species of the planet called Ferenginar, and whose civilization was built on the ideals of free enterprise, where all other goals are subjugated to the pursuit of profit. The Ferengi Alliance, which was the governing body for this civilization was formed over a period of ten thousand years, beginning with the establishment of a system of currency such that all values and behaviors, socialization and exchanges were built around currency and profit (Memory-alpha.org, 2010). Like the Ferengis, our modern society has become a place where souls and virtues are sold for dollars and educational institutions, especially business and career-technology-based universities and colleges promote and support the model by marketing and selling “education” in the form of specialized and accelerated

“anytime, anyplace” service where learning and scholarliness are often low in quality or absent in forms.

Accreditation and Modern Education: Free Enterprise Conceptions of Quality

As a result of the uncontrollable turn that modern society has taken in terms of our emergence in a contemporary world built on profit maximization and survivalist economics and materialism, and propulsion toward a future of uncertainty for which we must gather wealth by any means necessary, the degree of competition among us in all walks of life and on all platforms has dramatically increased, and the workplace or proscenium upon which the dramatis personae of economic theories; firms, households, and governments must play, has turned into the battleground where technological advancement, increased knowledge, and the need for more specialized and skilled workers have driven us to commoditize learning opportunities in the form of training and education at an alarming rate. The rate of consumption which the market demands of education and training – knowledge and skills demand and consumption, has left schools, colleges, and universities competing among each other in desperate and even despicable ways, such that education in the form of mere training and book-scanning that the majority offers, has become just another “player” and card in Capitalism’s game and race to the bottom of the consciousness funnel.

Quality like the concept of “Free Enterprise” has become a “Free” word synonymous with “Accreditation” as far as modern education in the form of “training” at majority institutions is concerned. The stamp of accreditation is often misperceived and misinterpreted as “quality inherent” in many schools, colleges, and universities. However, this is far from the fact because accreditation like any modern industries caught in the grip of Capitalism is just another profit maximizing and monetarily-engaged industry. When it comes to modern education as it unfolds and is unfolding in this present society and century, we have become confused in our vocabulary and understanding as we replace the true old ideal of human trust based on evidence displayed of competence and values gained with the “accreditation stamp” which says, “Yes! There is quality here!” What we have forgotten to ask is, “Whose Quality?” We must remember that all accreditation agencies in the United States and those in many other territories are private ventures, driven not by noble values, humanity, compassion, and the idea of betterment for all, but by the same motive of Capitalism and the Ferengi Civilization: Profit! Thus, the question of “Whose Quality?” is not only very logical and sensible, but philosophically and academically legitimate.

Accreditation is defined by the U.S. Department of Education (2010) as “the recognition that an institution maintains standards requisite for its graduates to gain admission to other reputable institutions of higher learning or to achieve credentials for professional practice” (p. 1). This definition and understanding in the United States and elsewhere contains an assumption of quality and the idea that “standard” of a justifiably good degree (again, “Whose Standard?”) is inherent in organizations that are accredited by private regional and national bodies. In addition, there are many international, global, or worldwide accreditation agencies now operating as qualified accreditors in the global education industry, each opposing the other’s recognition as part of competitive domains and strategies. Accreditation can be described as formal recognition of a program of study, training, or continuing education development by an organization or agency composed of a group of people claiming expertise or authority on issues of standards and quality in that field. Given the definition by the U.S. Department of Education and the author’s definition, accreditation’s purpose then must be to recognize and assert “quality” based on a system or criteria of standards established by professionals, whose

standards and background are unfortunately often unknown to accredited institutions. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2010) “The goal of accreditation is to ensure that education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality” (p. 1). There we have it, accreditation is a quality initiative or venture where government has failed in its responsibility to ensure that education and its institutions live up to their true purpose.

Who Are the Accreditors?

Private agencies in the United States and many geographic regions across the globe handle the business of accreditation or ensuring that educational institutions of various types and levels meet “acceptable quality standards” as defined by their established charters. These agencies are often called “accreditation agencies” or “accrediting agencies” and often use words such as “commission” and “association” or even “agency” in their names. The U.S. Department of Education (2010) defines accrediting agencies as “organizations (or bodies) that establish operating standards for educational or professional institutions and programs, determine the extent to which the standards are met, and publicly announce their findings” (p. 1). Accrediting agencies do not only accredit institutions of education, learning, or training, but also professional bodies where licensing and certifications of some sort seem to communicate or convey an image of perception of quality and high standards as part of the selling process or their unique value propositions.

Accrediting agencies generally fall into several categories according to scope, geography, and areas of specialization. In terms of scope, geography and specializations, three types of accreditation have emerged to accredit institutions of education and training across the globe: regional, national, and international-global-worldwide accreditation. When considered from the perspective of subject or field of study, another type of accreditation emerges called “Specialized (Programmatic) Accreditation” as opposed to “General” or “Institutional” or Broad-Based Accreditation”. Institutions of education fundamentally need “Institutional Accreditation” which covers their overall scope, and thus, the term “Umbrella Accreditation” is technically correct to describe accreditation of the general type such as those provided by the six regional bodies, three national bodies described below, among others, and international-global-worldwide accrediting bodies or agencies. Specialized Accreditation serves the purpose of accrediting departments, colleges, schools, institutes, centers, or specialized programs in a field of study in a larger organization such as a university or educational corporation. For example, the schools of business in many colleges and universities are often accredited by specialized business accrediting agencies such as the IACBE, ACBSP, or AACSB.

Regional Accreditation

Regional accreditation is based on both scope and geography, while national accreditation is not based on geography but on scope mostly defined by institutional programs and shaped by costs factors and affordability by those institutions having only national accreditation. There are six regional accreditors or accrediting agencies that form a network with each focusing on a specific region of the United States and recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as “regional”. Regional accreditation means that a school, college, or university is accredited by one of the following regional accrediting bodies: Middle States, Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges; Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

(U.S. Department of Education, 2010). These regional agencies are recognized by both the United States Department of Education (USDE) and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). These regional accreditors traditionally grant most brick-and-mortar public and private universities and colleges their accreditation. Of the three types of accreditation; national, regional, and international-global-worldwide, regional accreditation is the most commonly accepted form of accreditation, especially in the United States, Canada, and many developed countries.

National accreditation

National accreditation means that a school, college, or university is accredited or recognized as having standards or quality defined as meeting educational expectations by one of the accrediting agencies recognized as a “national accreditor” by the U.S. Department of Education or other professional and private bodies. These agencies offer training and more technically-oriented accreditation of programs compared to regional agencies, which focus on brick-and-mortar and more traditional academic institutions (This is rapidly changing of course with so many large enterprise schools operating online such as Walden University, Capella University, Northcentral University, Keiser University, and the University of Phoenix, etc). Some examples of national accrediting bodies are the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (ACCSCT) which accredits career schools and technology programs, the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC) which accredits colleges that offer distance education, and the Accrediting Commission for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) which accredits private colleges and universities with a vocational focus (eLearners.com, 2010). National accrediting agencies are recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education as reliable authorities concerning the quality of education or training offered by the institutions of higher education they accredit. These agencies accredit single-purpose institutions (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2010).

International-Global-Worldwide

International-Global-Worldwide accreditation is a new form of accreditation designed to facilitate global transformation in, and the globalization of education with the advent of Online schooling or virtual schools, colleges, and universities, increased internationalization and the need for acceptance of education across national and regional boundaries, the need for rapid turnover education and training, the need for convenience, increased competition, and increased decentralization of education across the globe. These agencies are the least recognized among the three types of accreditation agencies as described above by scope and geography. Some examples of international-global-worldwide accrediting agencies or organizations include the following: International Accreditation Organization (IAO), Worldwide Accrediting Commission (WAC), International Commission for Higher Education (ICHE), International Accreditation Agency for Online Universities (IAAOU), International Accreditation Association for Online Education (IAAFOE), International Accreditation Commission (IAC), among others, and which are not recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and many other organizations and businesses in this country and elsewhere. Many of the international-global-worldwide accrediting bodies, organizations, associations, and agencies, as well as emerging and contemporary bodies serving the Online Education and Training Industry are treated as “diploma and degree mill accrediting bodies”.

Specialized (Programmatic) Accreditation and Institutional Accreditation

Most experts on accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education recognize two basic types of accreditation: “Specialized” and “Institutional” (what the author refers to as “General” or “Broad-Based” accreditation above) accreditation. According to the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Postsecondary Education (2010), “Institutional accreditation normally applies to an entire institution, indicating that each of an institution’s parts is contributing to the achievement of the institution’s objectives, although not necessarily all at the same level of quality. Specialized accreditation normally applies to the evaluation of programs, departments, or schools which usually are parts of a total collegiate or other postsecondary institution” (p. 1). According to eLearners.com (2010),

Specialized accreditation, also known as program-based accreditation, is awarded to specific programs or departments within a college or university. Specialized accreditation is offered by agencies that represent specific fields of study or professional organizations. These agencies do not accredit entire colleges. Instead, they accredit the programs within certain colleges that prepare students for their industry (p. 1).

There are sometimes no hard and fast lines between specialized (programmatic) and institutional (general) accreditation because as the Office of Postsecondary Education (2010) notes, regarding specialized accreditation, the unit accredited may be as large as a college or school within a university or as small as a curriculum within a discipline (p. 1). Furthermore, while many of the specialized accrediting agencies review units within a postsecondary institution which is accredited by one of the regional accrediting commissions, some of these specialized accrediting agencies also accredit professional schools and other specialized or vocational or other postsecondary institutions which are free-standing in their operations (Office of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education, 2010). This is contrary to what is asserted by eLearners.com: “These agencies do not accredit entire colleges. Instead, they accredit the programs within certain colleges that prepare students for their industry” (p. 1). In fact, there are several schools or institutions focusing on specialized fields only and require no more than specialized accreditation.

Given the above, we see that specialized or programmatic accrediting agencies sometimes function in the capacity of institutional accrediting agencies, and this results when a school, college, or university, or any other education, training, and professional organization has an independent stand-alone operation requiring accreditation. Some of the specialized or programmatic accrediting bodies or agencies in the United States that often act in such a capacity include the American Bar Association (ABA), the American Medical Association (AMA), International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE), the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), and the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) accrediting bodies, among several others in the fields of healthcare (example; JCAHO – Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations), teacher education (example; NCATE – National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education), and other programmatic fields, professions, or studies. The lack of a clear line between institutional and specialized accreditation is where most of the issues and conflicts surrounding accreditation as a process which creates disadvantage to many who pay for expensive regionally and programmatically accredited degrees and education emerge. In addition, the ability of the free enterprise market to create opportunities through unethical and illegal practices makes accreditation, accreditation competition, and accreditation types and affordability issues of contention in the bid to arrive at an objective definition and acceptance of what constitutes subjective quality in an industry which has out-grown the ability of private agencies and governments alike in terms of

monitoring, regulation, and control.

Accreditation Discrimination

Resulting from the factors of competition, differential conceptions of quality and expectations of educational standards, costs, perceived benefits, lack of centralization in accreditation and school approval, traditional versus online schooling, education, and studies, is a big problem affecting millions of students, thousands of educators, and thousand of schools, colleges, and universities worldwide. This big problem can uniquely be called “Accreditation Discrimination” which simply refers to discrimination resulting for individuals simply because their educational credentials or academic degrees and qualifications are accredited or not accredited by a specific agency or agencies. All of this happens as a result of competition and the failure by a Federal or national common agency to centrally dictate or set standards for accreditation. For example, regional accrediting bodies, the six recognized in the United States do not recognize the national and independent accrediting agencies which exist and often, will not accept their credits or degrees as equivalent. This form of discrimination is quite common and inherent in the private accreditation industry since it takes place at a larger level, the institutional level, unlike specialized or programmatic accreditation. Nevertheless, accreditation discrimination also stems from programmatic or specialized accreditation when credentials or degrees earned and granted by program departments, centers, schools, or colleges in a university are not recognized by another simply because it has a different agency granting programmatic accreditation for the same program. For example, business programs, schools and colleges of business or departments of business and business-related studies are accredited by the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE), the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), and the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), and European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS) in the United States and worldwide. However, many business schools and colleges or programs with AACSB accreditation will not accept outright or recognize business degrees that are ACBSP, IACBE, or EQUIS, or other business programs/schools accrediting body.

The business field and business schools and colleges seem to be the most prevalent ground or areas in which Accreditation Discrimination takes place. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) is recognized as superior and is the strongest among the first three major specialized accrediting bodies for business education identified above. It is the most desirable of all those three types of business accreditation and has become a brand name in the accreditation industry. According to Yates and Shough (2006), “AACSB is the highest professional accreditation that a collegiate business program can achieve. Only 25% of all business schools in the U.S. are AACSB accredited” (p. 16). The question which begs with regard to the foregone statement is, “Why is AACSB so well-recognized and preferred among institutions of business?” Yates and Shough (2006) answer this question by posing a similar which they explore, “Does the accreditation of a school of business by AACSB have any bearing upon the school’s standing with the local population or is it primarily a term that is recognized only within academic circles and the townsfolk have no opinion?” (p. 15). AACSB is regarded as a “coveted” accreditation among universities, colleges, and schools of business and acts directly as a great edge or advantage over the competition lacking such an “illustrious” accreditation. In their study concerning the perceptions regarding AACSB accreditation by students, business people, and non-business people, Yates and Shough (2006) discovered that some of the graduates advised the faculty that it appeared to them that graduating from an AACSB accredited school made it easier to

get accepted into graduate school, while very few students commented about how the accreditation affected their employment opportunities. Overall, their study showed that accreditation by AACSB does matter to the above stakeholders – students, business people, and non-business people. The degree to which AACSB accreditation matters differs among the three groups, further emphasizing what could be a mere myth of accreditation power in assuring educational quality.

Cavico, Mujtaba, and McFarlane (2010), in their book, *The State of Business Schools: Educational and Moral Imperatives for Market Leaders*, deliberate on the issue of business school accreditation, paying particular attention to the AACSB accreditation and perceptions surrounding its worth and value, the advantages, and disadvantages of pursuing and possessing the AACSB stamp. According to Cavico, Mujtaba, and McFarlane (2010):

In the United States, business schools generally seek and possess accreditation under general charters of regional accreditation bodies-that is, 'umbrella' accreditation, but there are three specialized agencies that provide specific business program or business school accreditation in the United States and elsewhere. They are the AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business), IACBE (International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education), and ACBSP (Association of collegiate Business Schools and Programs) ... [with] AACSB being in more demand nationally.

(pp. 19-20)

The problem is that the demand resulting from perception of higher standard and quality stemming from popularity and tradition has made the AACSB a discriminatory accreditation by schools, colleges, and universities of business that possess this accreditation, especially for graduates, prospective graduate business students, and prospective business faculty from non-AACSB accredited business programs and schools. Cavico, Mujtaba, and McFarlane (2010) point out that the downside of AACSB accreditation appears in the form of a lack of flexibility in standards. While standards are rigorous, they must be flexible for individuals and business organizations to effectively manage and deal with change, integrating new trends and methods into existing ones to maximize performance and productivity.

While AACSB accreditation perhaps deserves the acclaim it has earned, perhaps also owing to the fact that many leading business programs and universities across the country having this accreditation might have promulgated its fame as what Cavico, Mujtaba, and McFarlane (2010) describe as the "gold standard", the bad part about reality is that AACSB enjoys this honor or status at the expense of devaluing IACBE and ACBSP, and degrees accredited by these two alternative business accrediting agencies or any other existing, or which might emerge. This has resulted in rampant accreditation discrimination in educational institutions, and particularly, in academia across the country and some parts of the world, especially with the establishment of AACSB-International. Many individual graduates have completed their business degrees at non-AACSB schools and face great challenges of rejection and discrimination when they attempt to further their business education by enrolling in AACSB schools or obtain faculty jobs at those schools. There are many schools and colleges of business that will not hire or consider hiring faculty members whose business degrees are not AACSB accredited, even when such degrees are of high quality and are accredited by IACBE and/or ACBSP, or EQUIS. This is gross discrimination resulting from differential accreditation and affects thousands of academicians and students in the United States and across the globe annually.

While accreditation discrimination is widespread in a decentralized privately regulated educational system like that of the United States, such a form of discrimination is not only a big issue with specialized accreditation, but was initially devised by institutional accreditation based on the divisions of the continental United States into six regions by the network regional agencies described above. When individuals complete years of education, spending thousands of dollars, and complete hundreds of hours of study, research, and writing for their degrees and are shunned because such degrees are from differing legitimate accrediting agencies, it is not only discrimination facilitated by “special recognition” of agencies as unequal in quality as approval by the U.S. Department of Education and other bodies, but also a downright injustice to graduates. While AACSB is a good accreditation and while regional accreditation is desired and respected, national accrediting agencies and other legitimate accrediting agencies with a strategic protocol for assuring quality compliance through established standards should be equally respected in order to afford schools and individual graduates equal opportunities. While rules and regulations by accrediting and quality assurance bodies are important in the progress of schools (Kaifi, 2010), they can result in accreditation discrimination where competition drives differential perceptions of quality in such a way as to discredit and reduce value perception in competitive markets where there must be market drivers, market driven companies, and those companies that are neither coming or going, and still, those that are surely on their way to the grave.

Impact on School Choice, Costs, and Professional Prospects in Academia

The most significant impact of accreditation discrimination or discrimination stemming from accreditation is seen in school choice, education costs, and professional prospects of graduates, especially those who aim to become professors or educators in the academy. The author has personally witnessed the devastation that can result from accreditation discrimination, especially where specialized accreditation, which seems a small and even trivial matter, can mean the difference between getting into a graduate school and getting a dream job one has worked for an entire lifetime. Some examples from a few years ago will relate some of the pains resulting from accreditation discrimination of the type and nature described in this article. A few years ago the author taught business courses at a college which is accredited by the Accrediting Commission on Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS), a highly respected national accrediting agency without any known major complaints or reputation problems. This college offered associate and bachelor's degrees in several subjects including legal studies, business management, and administration, among others. Upon graduating from the college with their Bachelor of Science in Management and Business Administration, several students applied to regionally accredited universities accredited by one of the six regional bodies, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and were denied admissions to MBA and other Master's programs in business. This caused much anguish, pain, and devastation to the students, who although received formidable instructions and a good business education, were denied opportunity for further or advanced studies in business simply because their degrees were not regionally accredited. This is a grave problem affecting education and far too many students and prospective students are unaware of this. Thus, it is important for students to understand how accreditation differences at both the institutional and programmatic or specialized levels can affect their well-being, continued educational advancement, and career prospects. Another example serves to demonstrate how accreditation discrimination has resulted from competition and differences resulting from the opposition accrediting bodies have toward each other. Another group of students graduated from a regionally accredited university were denied admittance to a program at another

regionally accredited university accredited by the same regional body because their degrees lacked the specialized accreditation for a particular college within that university where they sought entrance. Thus, the difference between national and regional accreditation and specialized accreditation agency types can affect the prospects of individuals to further their education and/or obtain the job they desire.

Apart from school choice impact, accreditation discrimination affects educational costs. There is a great difference between the costs of education at regionally and non-regionally accredited schools in terms of tuition, program duration, and associated costs. Regionally accredited schools are often far more expensive by having higher tuitions, sometimes more credit hours, and longer program duration than nationally or globally accredited schools, colleges, and universities. The same can be said of schools, colleges, or programs accredited by specialized or programmatic agencies. For example, degrees from an AACSB accredited business school or college are usually more expensive and have longer duration, and sometimes more credit hours than degrees from schools or business departments without any business accreditation, but fall only under “umbrella accreditation” or institutional accreditation. The fact is that the costs associated with obtaining regional and specialized accreditation from an agency like the AACSB are extremely high, and these institutions holding regional and specialized accreditation of this nature must cover the costs of accreditation by transferring the burden to students in the form of tuition rate increase and increased study time. After all, the longer you take to complete a degree and the more credits you have to take, the more money these institutions stand to make; thereby, maximizing their profits and bringing about the perception that longer duration means higher quality. Many schools that are not regionally accredited and which do not possess a specialized accreditation such as the AACSB accreditation are schools of high quality and standards, sometimes higher quality and standards than their regionally and AACSB accredited counterparts. It all depends on organizational cultural values, philosophical roots, quality of faculty, educational-pedagogical approach, curriculum, and established and applied academic standards.

The most disheartening aspect of accreditation discrimination is its impact on educators who are deprived of opportunities to contribute to student learning, institutional growth and diversity, and society as a result of accreditation discrimination. Annually, thousands of graduates leave colleges and universities with the hope of joining the academy or higher educational institutions as faculty members. However, the hopes of hundreds and even thousands are dashed due to differences in institutional and programmatic and/or specialized accreditation that prevent them from being hired or deprive them of a faculty position. When the problem is an institutional problem, it is less agonizing as most individuals should know that teaching at regionally accredited institutions requires regionally accredited degrees, and that teaching at nationally and private-accredited schools will be a reality with regionally accredited or nationally accredited degrees or both. The problem is mostly one of higher education or postsecondary education. In the public or private K-12 school systems, national accreditation or even global accreditation will do since certification by State Boards as a teacher takes precedence overall degree accreditation type. Recognizing the realities of discrimination and rejection which accreditation has created through competition and differential perceptions of quality among higher educational institutions, prospective faculty must carefully choose their schools for graduate studies, and in doing so, must keep abreast of the changes in the accrediting industry. While specialized accreditation poses the most aggravating and disappointing feeling of having been discriminated against based on school choice and accreditation type by prospective faculties in many fields, the business field is the most disturbing where AACSB has become and is emerging as the desired standard as more and more schools become AACSB converts. Many good and exceptional business schools that do not

have AACSB accreditation are now jumping on the bandwagon. They are investing thousands of dollars and hours into obtaining AACSB accreditation without understanding the potential drawbacks described by Cavico, Mujtaba, and McFarlane (2010).

According to Cavico, Mujtaba, and McFarlane (2010), “Many schools advertising for faculty... specifically and explicitly require that the faculty candidates be graduates of AACSB accredited schools of business” (p. 31). This poses a significant problem for many individuals who have studied long and hard to obtain graduate degrees in the field of business with hopes of teaching in business schools and colleges. Many prospective business professors hold their masters and doctoral degrees from non-AACSB accredited business programs, schools, colleges, and departments, and like their AACSB degree holders, have studied hard and written quality and even sometimes superior dissertations, hold numerous publications and other academic awards and achievements, only to be turned down for a job because their alma maters did not have AACSB, but perhaps IACBE, ACBSP, or just institutional accreditation. The author has identified a listing of faculty advertised jobs below in *Appendix 1* from three sources: the Chronicle of Higher Education, HigherEdJobs.com, and Individual University Websites to show exactly how blatant and shallow schools and academia have become with outright accreditation discrimination. Examples of the types shown in *Appendix 1* are common and convey to us that there is a real problem in higher educational institutions and the accreditation industry that needs to be appropriately addressed. The AACSB accredited business schools and colleges have initiated a systematic process of correction enveloped in the concept of “AACSB Qualified” where faculty members or prospective faculty without AACSB accredited business degrees can undergo training to become “AACSB Qualified” – another moneymaker and profit-driven ideology impacting conceptions of learning and educational diversity.

Cavico, Mujtaba, and McFarlane (2010) point out some important factors that should be considered regarding AACSB accreditation, especially for those schools and colleges of business or universities hosting business programs and deciding to pursue AACSB accreditation. These include considering if AACSB is worthwhile, the costs associated with AACSB accreditation, the sacrifices to be made, the impact on pursuing AACSB accreditation on faculty, staff, students, organizational structure, lines of authority, curriculum, and the ability to embrace academic diversity. AACSB accreditation because of its decisively favorable policies placing curriculum tightly under administrative deployment can stifle the creativity and intellectual freedom of faculty instructors in programs and classrooms. In addition, the ability to hire a diverse pool of faculty is sapped under AACSB accreditation as demonstrated by the examples of a narrow approach to defining competence evident in the faculty recruitment efforts seen in *Appendix 1*. When schools become narrow-minded by thinking that only AACSB degree graduates or degree holders are qualified or have high quality education and ability, they are making a grave mistake because accreditation in general, and specific type of accreditation do not necessarily mean quality. The worse scenario that students and graduates face out there is the possession of an unaccredited degree or graduating from an unaccredited academic institution. This does not necessarily mean that such schools lack quality and standard; in fact, though this is the general assumption by the U.S. Department of Education, many educational institutions, business and professional organizations, it is really not the case. There are many unaccredited institutions offering quality programs with high academic standards. In fact, accreditation is fairly new in the history of education and the greatest of institutions of learning and education have never been accredited in the past. Modern education has met with many devises including accreditation, which is now more of a problem than a solution for many as it exists.

CONCLUSION

Accreditation as it currently stands is an inherently discriminatory process and industry which severely affects the perception of educational quality and standards, school choice, educational costs, and professional prospects in the field of academia and various industries. The accreditation dilemma or problem must be appropriately and satisfactorily addressed in order for any significant national improvements to take place in higher education. When a process meant to uphold and promote quality becomes a discriminatory and profit-maximizing competitive practice, it cannot meet its own standards of expectations and becomes just another problem for higher education rather than a solution. The greatest weakness in accreditation as a regulatory practice is perhaps that it is a private enterprise and a decentralized activity which, like the free market takes on any shape or form that yields the highest returns in terms of money and profits.

In many Caribbean and Third World nations “accreditation” as it exists in the United States and many developed countries is inexistent. What exists is centralized approval of secondary and postsecondary institutions through what is called a “Ministry of Education” overseeing all aspects of education as a public good. However, even this is rapidly changing as a result of the globalization of education where many foreign colleges and universities have moved to these regions via the Internet or physically to effectuate change and make the concept of accreditation in both institutional and programmatic forms part of those cultures and societies. Accreditation is not quality and neither does it guarantee quality. It is simply a private venture built on the idea of quality and taken to a level where education seems to have no value without its stamp of approval. Cavico, Mujtaba, and McFarlane (2010) tell us that “The true test of a school is the marketplace; that is, if a school delivers what it promises, produces value for its students, the community, and society, and the market recognizes and rewards such value production, then the school may be as well off without accreditation, and may be worse off with it” (p. 30). The truly learned and wise who loves knowledge and learning understands that accreditation has no bearing on scholarliness, intellect, and academics. Perception and passion are the differences between a literate and an exceptionally learned man.

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APPENDIX 1

Faculty Accreditation Discrimination Examples

Assistant Professor of Management

- Candidates should have a Ph.D. in a Management-related field from an AACSB accredited institution (or ABD nearing completion of dissertation) with evidence of or potential for high quality teaching and research.
- The successful candidate will be expected to teach primarily organizational behavior and leadership.
- An interest and experience in teaching business ethics and/or international management is desirable.
- Salary and benefits are competitive with AACSB accredited institutions.

Assistant/Associate Professor of Management

- The Department of Management is seeking qualified applicants with expertise in the fields of sustainability, corporate social responsibility, corporate governance, and strategic management.
- Applicant should possess a doctorate in business from an AACSB accredited school.
- Applicants must demonstrate excellence in teaching and research in their disciplines.

Assistant Professor of Management

Minimum Qualifications:

- PhD or DBA in Management from an AACSB accredited institution.
- ABD considered at the rank of Instructor.

Assistant Professor of Management

- MBA required, Doctorate preferred, or ABD near completion considered from university accredited by AACSB, ACBSP or equivalent.

- Professional and teaching experience are desirable.
- Salary will be commensurate with qualifications and experience, and in line with AACSB guidelines.

Full/Associate Professor

- Graduate degrees must be from AACSB accredited programs.

Assistant Professor – Management

- Candidates will also be responsible for engaging in scholarly activity consistent with AACSB international accreditation.

Assistant Professor in Management

Minimum Requirements:

- Ph.D. in Strategic Management from an AACSB accredited program in Business

Assistant/Associate Professor

- Preference will be given to candidates with completed Ph.D. in management or related area.
- Teaching responsibilities at the undergraduate and MBA levels will likely include the areas of organizational behavior, human resources, principles of management, strategic management, or entrepreneurship.
- The successful candidate will have demonstrated excellence in teaching, demonstrated potential for research in business, and commitment to service, commensurate with AACSB International accreditation.

Visiting Professor

Minimum Educational Qualifications:

- The department seeks candidates with an earned doctorate in educational leadership, policy studies or a related discipline.
- The degree must be from a regionally accredited or internationally recognized institution.

Assistant Professor in International Business

Minimum Qualifications:

- The position requires a Ph.D. or DBA from an AACSB accredited business school

Assistant/Associate Professor of International Business

Required:

- Earned Ph.D. in Business (closely related fields will also be considered)
- Academically qualified and/or professionally qualified by current AACSB standards
- A clearly demonstrated primary focus in teaching and research and a commitment to scholarly research

Assistant Professor of Management

Qualifications:

- Ph.D. in Management or Organizations. ABD will be considered but PhD must be in hand by September 1, 2011.
- We seek collegial faculty who view themselves foremost as educators and possess a commitment to scholarship to inform their teaching.
- Only candidates who would be deemed academically qualified in accordance with our AACSB International accreditation will be considered.
- Preference for corporate and international experience.
- Preference for candidates with Ph.D. from an AACSB International accredited institution.

Faculty, Tenure-Track, International Business

Minimum Qualifications:

- The position requires a Ph.D. or DBA from an AACSB accredited business school. (ABD will be considered.)
- Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities: The position requires a Ph.D. or DBA from an AACSB accredited business school. (ABD will be considered.)

Professor of Business Leadership

Qualifications:

- Doctorate in business with an emphasis in leadership or closely related field from an AACSB accredited program
- A record meriting appointment as a full professor with tenure in a business school
- Significant leadership experience, preferably out of academia as well as in academia, including global exposure
- Proven and on-going record of excellent teaching, quality scholarship and a commitment to university and professional service

Sources: HigherEdJobs.com (2010); www.univjobs.com, (2010); and Chronicle of Higher Education (chronicle.com, 2010).

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